



# NEWS RELEASE

## OFFICE OF THE STATE'S ATTORNEY FOR HOWARD COUNTY

**For Immediate Release:**

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July 24, 2017

### **Ellicott City Woman Pleads Guilty to Drug and Auto Manslaughter Charges**

An Ellicott City motorist who struck and killed a pedestrian in a residential neighborhood last fall, pleaded guilty to auto manslaughter and a related drug charge in Howard County Circuit Court this morning. Brittany McElhiney, 29, of the 10000 block of Hobsons Choice Lane, pleaded guilty to auto manslaughter in the death of 78-year-old Robert Dukehart before Judge Timothy J. McCrone. In a separate case arising from the collision, McElhiney also pleaded guilty to one count of possession with intent to distribute marijuana.

According to police and prosecutors, on September 24 at approximately 10:32 a.m., witnesses observed McElhiney driving on the wrong side of Green Clover Drive where she collided with another vehicle. Her 2013 Ford Focus continued to the side of the roadway where it struck Dukehart. McElhiney was uninjured but Dukehart was transported by ambulance to the University of Maryland Shock Trauma Center where he succumbed to extensive injuries on October 19.

Senior Assistant State's Attorney James J. Dietrich told the court that police investigators determined that McElhiney was under the influence of drugs, primarily alprazolam (Xanax) when the accident occurred, and that two bags of marijuana were discovered in her vehicle. An extraction from the Ford Focus event data recorder revealed that McElhiney's vehicle was traveling in excess of 55 mph just prior to the accident; the speed limit on the residential street is 25 mph.

A subsequent search warrant executed at McElhiney's home on October 6 led to the recovery of a substantial amount of additional drugs, cash and paraphernalia, and resulted in drug manufacturing and distribution charges against McElhiney and her boyfriend, Richard E. Debois, 65, also of the 10000 block of Hobsons Choice Lane. His trial is scheduled for next month.

Judge McCrone set a sentencing date of November 30 and placed McElhiney on pre-sentence supervision during which time she must attend and participate in a Mothers Against Drunk Driving victim impact panel. Dietrich told the court that he will recommend a five-year prison sentence—15 years, suspending all but five years.

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